

# Escalate news

The newsletter of the Education Subject Centre - advancing learning and teaching in education

This special edition on the theme of lifelong learning is edited by John Storan and Tony Hudson from the University of East London

The contributions that the various authors have made to this edition of the newsletter represent a range of voices and perspectives. In inviting these rich and insightful inputs, my co-editor Tony Hudson and I quickly realised we had agreed to deliver the undeliverable, and that was a newsletter that was all about lifelong learning. We of course had choices (the prerogative of exercising editorial responsibility, you could say) but we may have also gone about the job in a different way.

We could have asked our contributors to all write about lifelong learning, and kept them strictly to this brief. In fact, as you will see, we did invite one piece on lifelong learning head on, as it were, and this is the contribution from Professor Danny Saunders at the University of Glamorgan, which offers a telling strategic overview of lifelong learning in Wales. The intention with the other contributions was to try to illustrate something of the breadth of provision

which might fit most tellingly into a strategy or vision for lifelong learning. Does this selection of pieces represent lifelong learning? No, it certainly doesn't as there are gaps in terms of age based provision, informal and experiential learning to name just a few. Lifelong learning has a multiplicity of meanings and therefore it could be argued that any meaning that is applied is both contestable and problematic. The 2009 Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning (Schuller and Watson 2009) recognised this when it observed that for the purposes of the report, 'lifelong' means from cradle to grave and includes the implications for early childhood education and for schooling. However, here we are not in tune with the inquiry, in that our focus in bringing together this collection



of articles has been largely on adult, further and higher education (HE). So, partial and limited it is, but perhaps through the breadth and particularities of the contributions, we gain a glimpse of what a truly lifelong learning vision of learning might constitute. So, each of these papers offers a part of the landscape for thinking about what a ►

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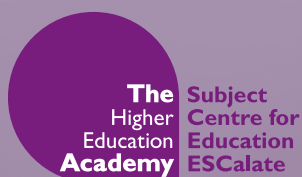
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vision for lifelong learning might need to include. As you will see, the scope and contents of each piece is as rich as it is insightful, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank each contributor for their individual pieces, that form part of an emergent lifelong learning education landscape. To whet your appetite a taster of each contribution is now provided.

For example, in his piece, Tony Acland helps us to consider the value and significance of the future of outreach work, and how the lessons and successes of the Aimhigher programme in England can be further built upon.

The adult college perspective provided by Alan Brown illustrates an imaginative and innovative approach to continuing professional development, aimed at both community volunteers and also qualified tutors. The progression and professional learning opportunities this programme has produced has significantly enhanced tutoring capacity.

Understanding and raising participation in Northern Ireland is the focus of Dr. Damian O'Kane's paper. He gives a strategic perspective on the policy developments which are currently underway in Northern Ireland. Drawing on his extensive and impactful 'Step-Up' programme, he reminds us just how critical it is to connect up practice and policy in this area of lifelong learning.

The perspective of learners is provided by a group of McNair scholars from the University of New Hampshire who also gave an international perspective, or at least a commentary, from a USA standpoint. Coming to terms with an unfamiliar system of education and taking part in a short post-graduate programme, their developing research skills are framed by their formative experience of their time meeting and learning alongside lifelong learning educators at the FACE conference, as well as other contexts.

Work integrated learning (WIL) is the focus of Tony Hudson's article in which he reflects on an innovative project: Creative Industries - Creative Solutions, designed to enhance graphic design students' employability. Given the portfolio careers that many creative and cultural industries graduates are likely to experience, such programmes need to operate in a climate of intellectual enquiry which enables and encourages students to become lifelong learners.

The multi-national character of the PASCAL Universities Regional Engagement project is the backdrop for Professor Mike Osborne's piece. The PURE project illustrates the way in which a wide range of international knowledge and expertise can be mobilised to support and engage with higher education institutions and their regions across a range of areas, including widening access, CPD, and knowledge exchange through economic, social and cultural lenses. The paper reminds us, if indeed we need reminding, that the questions and issues that many of the contributors highlight are truly global questions, and in a sense take us back to the need for a vision.

Last but by no means least, Andrew Rawson provides an insightful account of the lifelong learning networks which have done so much between them to broker HE progression opportunities between partners in different parts of the country.

So at the risk of being seen to make the conclusion fit the evidence, I am drawn back to the deliberations of the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning that offers a vision of society in which lifelong learning is central. By using this picture of a learning society, we can begin to see the values, perspectives and aspirations of our seven contributors in a way that speaks loudly to this vision.

**Our vision is a society in which learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and global responsibility. We believe that it is intimately connected with the achievement of freedom of choice, health and wellbeing, dignity, cultural identity and democratic tolerance. As a consequence, we begin from the premise that the right to learn throughout life is a human right.**

### Reference

Schuller, T., & Watson, D. (2009) Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the future for lifelong learning. NIACE, Leicester.



### John Storan

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Professor John Storan is also Director of Action on Access which is the national Co-ordination team for widening participation. As founding current Chair of the Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE) he represents communities of practitioners involved in Access and Lifelong Learning from across the UK and beyond. For many years John has been an influential regional and national figure on Lifelong Learning and Widening Participation in HE. In 2001 he was made a Professorial Fellow at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST). He is also an ESCalate Advisory Board member.